

which will be found under the title "Souvenirs," in a second volume of "Contes & Ninon," published in 1874.

In the latter part of 1866 his pecuniary position was a declining one. As he wrote to his friend, Antony Valabregue, he found himself in a period of transition. He had penned a pretty and pathetic *nouvelle*, "Les Quatre Journe'es de Jean Gourdon," for "L'illustration,"¹ but he was chiefly turning his thoughts to dramatic art, going, he said, as often as possible to the theatre:— with the idea, undoubtedly, that, as he had failed to conquer Paris as an art critic and a novelist, he might yet do so as a playwright. The young man was certainly indomitable; after each repulse he came up, smiling, to try the effect of another attack. Already in 1865, although his comedy, "La Laide," had been declined by the Odeon Theatre, he had started on a three-act drama, called "La Madeleine," and this now being finished he sent it to Montigny, the director of the Gymnase Theatre, who replied, however, that the play was "impossible, mad, and would bring down the very chandeliers if an attempt were made to perform it." Harmant of the Vau-deville also declined "La Madeleine," but on the ground that the piece was "too colourless," from which, as Alexis points out, one may surmise that he had not troubled

to read it.

After this experience Zola slipped his manuscript into a drawer and turned to other matters. In December, 1866, he is found informing Valabregue that he has received a very flattering invitation to the Scientific Congress of France,² and asking him, as he cannot attend personally,

¹ "L'illustration," December 15, 1866, to February 16, 1867. The story is included in the "Nouveaux Contes & Ninon," 1874.

² It must have "been held, we think, at Marseilles or Aix.